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THE CONVERT'S ROSARY

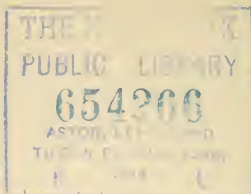
THE CONVERT'S ROSARY



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INTRODUCTION.

OF all the many devotions practised by the Catholic Church, there is none so universally popular as the recitation of the Rosary. The reason is obvious. It appeals to all classes and conditions of people. Rich and poor, learned and ignorant alike, find in it one of their greatest consolations and spiritual helps. Wherever we go, East or West; from the humblest country homestead to the fashionable church in Mayfair; from the mysterious gloom of "Notre Dame des Victoires" in Paris to the proud Basilica of St. Peter at Rome, we see the familiar beads in use. The Church tells us that this devotion originated about seven hundred years ago, and was first made known to St. Dominic through a vision of our Lady. Whatever its antiquity may be, the fact remains, that over two hundred millions of Christians practise it, and thereby bear witness to its worth.

When we Converts "lay aside the old man and put on the new" we are expected, in making a profession of our faith, to make also a general act of acquiescence in the devotions sanctioned by the Church. The latter is far too wise and indulgent a mother



to expect us to learn all our lessons in a day. When, through storm and stress, we have at last reached the fold, she allows us at first to rest in her arms, and listens calmly and without reproof to our petulant declaration that we cannot practise what we do not understand. In her infinite wisdom she knows that we cannot dwell long in her fold whilst remaining a stranger to all that she holds sacred and dear. So she gently soothes her tired child, and bides her time. Little by little, sooner or later, however, she has her way, and the once wayward one succumbs to the comfort of fingering the beads.

Some Converts tell us that they practised this devotion in their Anglican days, although they own to having done so in a shamefaced, surreptitious manner, which robbed it of half its charm. To most of us, however, it is at first strange and somewhat alarming. We are bound to retain at the outset some of our Protestant prejudices. The habits of mind of many years are not cast aside in a day. The fear of "vain repetitions" makes itself felt; of a mechanical recitation of prayers by the lips, in which the heart and mind have no part. It is highly probable, indeed, that our first recitations of the Rosary will have exactly the result we fear. The "Our

Fathers " and the " Hail Marys " will fall from our lips, the beads will glide through our fingers, while our hearts will remain untouched by the great mysteries we are trying to commemorate. The spirit of the devotion evades us, while we are engaged in studying its outer form.

The whole object of the Rosary is to keep before our mind's eye and meditate upon the chief events in the lives of Our dear Lord and of His Blessed Mother. By the use of the Rosary the Nativity, the Passion and the Death of Christ (instead of being far-off occurrences, which happened nearly two thousand years ago) become the daily actualities of our lives, far more real and tangible to us, than the so-called realities which surround us. But at the beginning it requires study and a determination to triumph over first difficulties. Most Converts who have become used to it can bear witness to the fact that their Rosary has given them a more personal intimate knowledge of Our Lord's Life and Passion than any amount of sermons, church-going or Bible-reading did in their Protestant days.

Those who find it hard to concentrate their thoughts upon the subjects of the meditations should try saying their Rosary before the

Blessed Sacrament, during some quiet hour, when the church is empty. Our Lord's presence on the Altar will help them more than any other means to realise what they are doing. They will also probably find that their powers of meditating will vary greatly according to their health, surroundings and moods. Some days it will be comparatively easy to keep their minds fixed upon their prayers, at other times almost impossible. Worldly thoughts will somehow obtrude themselves and crowd out the spiritual ones. These are trials which must be put up with. Our Lord sees the intention to honour Him, and will no doubt judge us thereby.

I have endeavoured in these pages to draw out a little plan of how the Rosary can be said in such a way that each part should contain, not only a spiritual exercise, but a practical lesson, applicable to our daily lives. If any Converts should find that it has helped them to understand and love their Rosaries better, I shall have attained my object in writing it for those who, like myself, have left the storm-tossed vessel and "entered the haven where they would be."

Rosary Sunday,
October 1912.

HOW TO SAY THE ROSARY.

IT is customary to begin and end the Rosary by making the sign of the Cross. Devout Catholics also kiss the crucifix. Holding the latter in our hands, we then recite (mentally or aloud) the *credo* or belief : " I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth," etc. Going on to the first large bead we then say an " Our Father," etc., and on each of the three succeeding smaller beads a " Hail Mary," etc., winding up with a " Glory be to the Father," etc. to the large bead which follows.

At this point the Rosary proper commences. Here it might be well to pause and recall the day of the week, reminding ourselves of which of the three sets of mysteries falls to this particular day ; the joyful, sorrowful or glorious ones. Here, too, might the object, if any, be decided upon, for which this particular Rosary is being offered. (Offerings are such frequent occurrences in the lives of Catholics, that it should scarcely be necessary to remind them that every prayer, every Mass, every Communion, every abnegation of self can be offered to Our Lord for some particular intention.)

We now finger the same bead on which we said our "Glory be to God," and use it for the first "Our Father." Then we put as clearly as possible before our minds the mystery we wish to commemorate, and meditate upon it, while saying the ten "Hail Marys," accompanying the fingering of the ten small beads. This, repeated again and again, is the whole of the *body* of the Rosary. The *soul* is our meditation. To the last large bead is said a "Glory be to the Father," etc.

By meditation is meant a mental picture of each of the mysteries in turn, a taking of heart and mind back to those great and solemn events, which revolutionised the world. At the same time a striving to fathom the lesson under each mystery, a desire of growing in grace by pondering the same.

There is not a shadow of a doubt that the recitation of the Rosary can achieve great results ; that it has been employed time after time with success against all manner of foes ; that it will continue to record great victories long after we who sing its praises will be memories of a dim past.

All honour therefore to the most holy Rosary and to her who gave it birth !

THE THREE PARTS OF THE ROSARY.

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES*(said on Mondays and Thursdays)*

The Annunciation.

The Visitation.

The Nativity.

The Presentation of Our Lord.

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

(said on Tuesdays and Fridays.)

The Agony in the Garden.

The Scourging at the Pillar.

The Crowning with Thorns.

Jesus carrying the Cross.

The Crucifixion.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

(said on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays)

The Resurrection.

The Ascension.

The Coming of the Holy Ghost.

The Assumption of Our Lady.

The Coronation of Our Lady.

THE ROSARY APPLIED TO OUR
DAILY LIVES.

The Annunciation	Accepting God's Will.
The Visitation	Brotherly Kindness.
The Nativity	God's Love for us.
The Presentation	Self-Sacrifice.
The Finding of Jesus	Finding God.
The Agony in the Garden	Mental Agony.
The Scourging at the Pillar	Physical Pain.
The Crowning with Thorns	Humiliation.
The Carrying of the Cross	Bearing our Burdens.
The Crucifixion	Death.
The Resurrection	Overcoming Evil.
The Ascension	Ascending Godwards.
The Coming of the Holy Ghost	Faith in the Church.
The Assumption of Our Lady	Veneration of Our Lady.
The Coronation of Our Lady.	Eternal Happiness.

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

THE ANNUNCIATION
or
"ACCEPTING GOD'S WILL."

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it done unto me according to Thy word."—

St. Luke I., 38.

WHEN the Angel Gabriel appeared unto Mary, and announced to her that she should become the Mother of Our Lord, she was both troubled and perplexed. She was troubled by the way the Angel addressed her : "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women." She was frightened at receiving such honour from one so exalted, and in her modesty she shrank from the homage he expressed. But the angel reassures her : "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end." She cannot doubt any longer that she has indeed been singled out to be the instrument of unusual grace, but she is still perplexed as to how this miracle is to be achieved. Again the angel explains : "The Holy Ghost shall come upon

thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy one which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," ending with : " For with God nothing shall be impossible." Mary then lays aside her doubts and fears, and joyfully makes an act of such perfect submission to the Will of God, that it has remained a model to the entire Christian world ever since : " Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word."

One of the hardest lessons life teaches us is the need of renouncing our own small wills and of accepting the mighty will of God. Sooner or later we one and all have to learn it. We all start life with certain plans and ideals. Love, position, wealth and fame are some of the goals we strive for, and on which we concentrate our best energies and hopes. But the Master we serve is a jealous one : " Thou shalt have none other Gods but me." Gently, but firmly, he takes away our idols. When he does so, we do not always recognise the working of the divine hand. We blame fate, deplore our ill-luck, wonder in what way we have deserved these reverses, become hard, bitter or rebellious—everything except resigned. Sometimes, long after, we see the

wisdom of it, and the object for which a certain blow was dealt. But every fresh trouble finds us very much as before ; indignant, rebellious, distressed. We cannot really from our hearts say : " Thy will be done."

Every conversion is in itself an act of submission to the will of God. If undertaken in the right spirit, it was preceded by much prayer. St. Paul's cry : " Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ? " was ever wrung from our hearts, and when the answer came in unmistakeable tones : " Leave all, and follow Me," there was but one course open to us—we laid aside our doubts and fears and begged God to let it be unto us " According to his word." If we could only now carry that same spirit into our daily lives, all would be well. With perfect conformity to God's will in all things would come perfect peace. There are three ways of attaining it. By watching, by imitation, and by prayer. We must watch ourselves constantly, to see to what extent we are resisting the will of God. We must imitate those who have fought the same fight, and come out of it victorious. The Saints, with the Mother of Our Lord at their head, will then become our models, and by imitating their example we may hope

some day to share their reward. But above all we must pray, and learn to take everything, sorrow as well as joy, equally gratefully from His fatherly hand. Then in time we may learn to live by that most beautiful prayer: "O most merciful Jesus, grant to me Thy grace, that it may be with me, and continue with me even unto the end. Grant that I may always desire and will that which is to Thee most acceptable and most dear. Let Thy will be mine, and let my will ever follow Thine, and let me not be able to will or anything to forego, but what thou willest or dost not will."—*Imitation of Christ*.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may learn to accept God's will, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

THE VISITATION
or
“BROTHERLY KINDNESS.”

“ *Add to Godliness brotherly kindness.*”—

2 St. Peter I., 7.

WHEN Mary heard that her cousin Elizabeth was with child, she arose and went to her with haste, and abode with her about three months. Mary had only just heard the great news of her own destiny ; she might well have been wrapped up in that thought to the exclusion of all others ; but she who was to become the Mother of Our Saviour gave but little thought to herself. Her heart was moved with compassion towards the elder woman, and she started off immediately on that long and wearisome journey, in order to bring her cousin the comfort of her presence and sympathy.

What a lesson for us ! How seldom do we put ourselves out to oblige any one, how carefully do we watch over our own comfort and convenience ! Self-love looms very large in the composition of most of us. That is probably why Our Lord, in His divine foresight, gave us that precept of perfection to

“ love thy neighbour as thyself.” He knew how very few of us would attain such a standard, but He also knew that it was not an impossibility, so he has left us this goal to strive for. He Himself is our supreme model in this respect, as in all others, for He has given His very life for His neighbours. “ Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.” Life, however, does not always consist of great and heroic deeds. It is often the small acts which matter. In our intercourse with our neighbour it is the small acts of kindness which count, the prompt word of sympathy when needed, the ready ear with which we listen to their troubles, the interest we are prepared to take in all that concerns them. St. Peter urges us to let it be “ brotherly ” kindness. We are to treat our neighbours as so many brothers and sisters, all belonging to one great family, owning the same Father. We should be ready to defend their honour, be slow in judging or condemning them. Even when appearances are against them, we should find excuses for them, and overlook their faults. We should strive to show them little kindnesses ; we should delight in being of service to them.

Converts have many opportunities of

practising brotherly kindness. "Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." There is much need for help in all Catholic charities, much danger of loss of faith if that help is not forthcoming. We must all give in proportion to our means, remembering that even a cup of cold water given in His name will bring its reward.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, that we may always practise brotherly kindness. Amen."

THE NATIVITY
or
“GOD’S LOVE FOR US.”

“ I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”

—Jeremiah XXXI., 3.

ET homo factus est. The human mind fails to grasp the enormity of this thought. God made man. He, who existed from all eternity, and Whose kingdom shall have no end, born into this world for love of us. The Almighty Creator of these myriads of planets, before Whom the angels tremble, and Whom the seraphims adore, becoming a little helpless child for our sakes. For our sakes living for thirty years a hidden life, meekly subject to men, taking up with every fresh dawn His daily round of humble toil. For love of us bearing suffering, humiliation and contempt. For our sakes facing those terrible hours of agony on the cross . . . His whole life a continual proof of His love for us. And as then, so now. As once at Bethlehem, Nazareth, Golgotha, so now in every place where He is present in the Blessed Sacrament. How often neglected, forgotten, despised, denied ! He bears it all for love of us. Oh,

infinite love of God for us ! Fountain which never runs dry, which cannot be exhausted ! What are we to have deserved such love ?

The Christ Child in the Manger !

How hard it must have been to believe that that little helpless infant was the Maker of all things, " Very God of very God " ! How hard it is at times to grasp that, in receiving the sacred Host, we truly and certainly receive our God ! In either case we must learn to distrust our natural senses, and to be guided alone by our supernatural faith. God become man ; God become bread. " With God nothing shall be impossible. " " Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief ! "

When Christmas comes again, that dear festival of the Nativity, to whose real meaning so little thought is given in this busy world, let us newly-found children of the Church kneel before the Crib with greater reverence and gratitude than all others. Let us steep ourselves in the thought of His love, and let it sink deep into our tepid hearts. Let us join Our Blessed Lady and the shepherds in adoring Him, not at the Crib alone, but at every Catholic altar in the world. Let us adore Him every time we commemorate His Incarnation in our " Credo," in our Rosaries,

every time we hear the Sanctus bell at Mass.

Oh, sacred Heart which beats for us, and never ceases loving us, let us try to fathom the depths of Thy love! Let us make reparation to Thee for all who reject Thee. Let us adore Thee in the most Holy Sacrament of Thy love, where Thou liest helpless to-day, as once in the manger, where now, as then, human hands tend Thee, and Thou art to all appearances subject to men! Oh, Thou who hast loved us with an everlasting love, teach us to make Thee some worthy return for Thy love!

“ Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may love God in return for His love of us, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD
IN THE TEMPLE

or

“SELF-SACRIFICE.”

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.”

St. Matthew XVI., 24.

WHEN the time came for Our Lord to be presented at the Temple, His Blessed Mother took her divine Child there in obedience to the law. This presentation, however, has a deeper significance than a mere adherence to custom, for in it we may surely read Mary's willingness to offer her Child to God. It was on this occasion that she learned for the first time how much suffering would be hers. Simeon's prophecy “a sword shall pierce thy soul” must have sunk deep into that virgin heart, consecrating it still more to God's service. The greatest of all sacrifices was demanded from her: that she should give her own beloved Son to die on the cross. Therefore, at the Presentation, the Christ-child offers Himself to His Father in Heaven as a peace-offering for our sins, and Mary

shares in her Son's sacrifice by giving her dearest possession to God.

Sacrifice is the very keynote of our religion. In the Holy Mass the Church reminds us daily of that greatest of all sacrifices, teaching us that as Our dear Lord offered Himself for us, so must we be prepared to offer ourselves to Him. Our bodies to be "living sacrifices," our souls to be His for ever. There exists no truly Christian life without sacrifice. As God tested Abraham to find out whether he would be ready to sacrifice even his own son at God's command, so does He test each one of us, taking from us, or withholding, just whatever we most love and desire, in order to leave us free to give our whole hearts to Him. Unless we are willing to empty ourselves of "Self," we are no true disciples of Jesus Christ. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself" were Our Lord's own words, and no one ever lived a more selfless life than He.

Converts soon learn that self-sacrifice is expected of them. There are no conversions which are not preceded or followed by crosses. God demands a penalty for all the spiritual help he has showered on us in making us Catholics. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required."

Admittance into Christ's Church means to many a parting, or, at least, an estrangement, from all whom they love most on earth; the sorrow of not being understood; the pain of being alone in the midst of their joy. As time goes on these sorrows may even go on increasing, but there can be no going back for those who have once stood under the banner of Christ. Converts have to choose between their duty to God and to man, remembering always that "he who loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Let our self-sacrifice, therefore, be made joyfully, in full confidence that, in His own good time, God will give us those souls so dear to Him, from whom we are temporarily separated. His ways are incomprehensible, because the end of his workings is hidden in infinity. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." The day must come when the sacrifices He has demanded from us here below will meet with their reward. May we therefore go forward with ever-increasing readiness to sacrifice ourselves in His service, looking for guidance to that Lamb of God, from whom we would learn to be humble and meek, and so find rest for our sou's.

“ Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may be ever willing to sacrifice ourselves for God, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

or
“FINDING GOD.”

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”—

Jeremiah XXIX., 13.

WHEN Joseph and Mary returned home after the feast of the Passover, Our Lord deliberately remained behind in Jerusalem, giving His parents three days and nights of the most intense anxiety and sorrow on His behalf. Their relief and joy on finding Him, therefore, were indescribable, for it was the first time in their lives they had experienced the dread of losing Him, and the emptiness left by His absence.

Just as Jesus withdrew His beloved presence from those nearest and dearest to Him, on earth, so He deals at times with us. There are moments in our lives, when we seem to lose the sense of God's nearness, of His Justice, of His Mercy ; when we cry out into the night which surrounds us, and not the faintest echo answers us back. There are times of great darkness, in which like the

blind beggar, we can only pray for light :
“ Lord, that I may see ! ”

Converts are essentially seekers after God, after the truth. Many have sacrificed much to obtain it, and cannot therefore value the gift of faith too highly. There is no deeper or truer joy on earth, than when a soul, after an earnest search, at last finds its God. All its past difficulties and doubts, as well as the roughness of the road, are forgotten, in the sublime certainty of having found the truth. Something similar may perhaps be said of every one who finds satisfaction in his particular belief, but to those who have been admitted into the Catholic Church it comes in a measure only to be vaguely guessed at by those outside. To the former it is indeed a “ finding of Jesus ” in the truest sense of the word. No longer a stretching out of hearts and hands into the great unknown, but a deep and abiding certainty of having found Him. No convert can ever be sufficiently grateful for this precious gift of faith. Their whole lives should be acts of thanksgiving, for has not the prophecy been realised in them : “ Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your hearts ? ” They can indeed each one of them say with joy : “ Him I do really possess and adore,

whom the angels adore in Heaven ; but I, for the present by faith : they, by sight, and without a veil. I ought to be content with the light of true faith, and to walk therein until the day of everlasting brightness dawns, and the shadows of figures pass away.”—*Imitation of Christ.*

“ Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may be thankful for the gift of the faith, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

or

“MENTAL AGONY.”

“My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.”—

St. Matthew XXVI., 38.

IN the garden of Gethsemane was enacted that most heart-rending scene of Our Lord's passion, when He, who was ready to bear all things for our sakes, was overcome by human weakness, and His human nature rebelled against the sufferings which were awaiting Him. “Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me,” is the prayer of agony which is wrung from His lips, and His sweat becomes as drops of blood, trickling down on the ground.

There are those who hold that Our Lord, being God, could not have felt human pain and sorrow to the extent that we mortals do, that the strength of His divine nature upheld Him and lessened His pain. This is untrue. No human being can ever have suffered what Jesus did. He went through the bitterest agony of mind that can be imagined, for, added to the knowledge of His impending

passion, every detail of which He was able to foresee, came that bitter certainty of the multitude of souls who deliberately refused to be ministered to, souls who would deny Him in all ages, souls who, having known Him, would abandon Him in the end. It was in this hour that He uttered those sad words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Truly there was no sorrow like unto His sorrow; no depths of misery unknown to Our Saviour—His own friends and most loved disciples deserted and betrayed Him; He was despised, forsaken, alone. The cup which seemed too bitter to drink was at His lips, and even He could not repress a cry of anguish at what lay before Him. "Yet not My will, but Thine be done."

There are times when we too may be called upon to endure such agony of mind that we cry out in despair, and fall, bruised and helpless, at God's feet—He alone knows what we endure in such moments. We, too, pray that the chalice may be removed from us, but in His infinite wisdom, our heavenly Father does not always grant our prayer. Whatever our sorrow may be, the death of one whom we love, the unfaithfulness of one whom we trusted, disappointments in our work, the loss of a friend—He knows what

is best for us, so we must learn to say, like Our Lord "Thy will be done."

Converts have nearly all drunk of the cup of mental agony ; if they had not, they would probably not have "come home." It is probably their very sorrows that have brought them into the arms of the Church, for where else can a soul find the same balm for its wounds ? In contemplating the Agony in the Garden, in following the Way of the Cross, surely every Christian heart must be strengthened, every soul must be helped. That He should have been willing to face such agony of mind for us can but increase our love for Him, and in every fresh trial we can but repeat His prayer : "Not my will but Thine be done."

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may endure mental agony patiently, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen "

THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR
or
“PHYSICAL PAIN.”

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

—Romans VIII., 22.

NO sooner had Our Blessed Lord passed through those terrible hours of agony of mind in the Garden of Gethsemane, than He was called upon to suffer the most cruel of bodily tortures. He was taken and scourged. His sacred flesh was torn again and again, as the lashes descended on Him in great merciless blows. It was for our sins that He endured that terrible chastisement, for “with His stripes we are healed.” Oh, patient suffering of Jesus! “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” Oh, Lamb of God, teach us to be patient in suffering!

Physical pain appears to be inseparable from God’s creation. It ushers us into the

world, visits us again and again through life ; it is present at our passage into eternity. There are those who would deny the very existence of pain, who say that God can never have intended His creatures to suffer thus, who beg us to wean our thoughts from it and to believe that from the all-loving Creator can come nothing evil. Let us refer them to the passion and death of Christ, to the sufferings of His Blessed Mother, to the agonising pains endured by the martyrs. We have Our Lord's distinct command to follow Him. How can we expect to be exempt from pain ? There are others who admit that the sight of all the sufferings in the world has led them to doubt the very existence of a Creator, or at least to question His goodness and mercy.

To the Catholic the thought presents no difficulties. The Church has always taught the Gospel of the necessity of pain. She blesses and sanctifies those who have endured it manfully, she eases their burden by bidding them unite their sufferings to the sufferings of Christ. She strengthens us by her sacraments, teaches us how to gain merit by bearing all patiently, she forbids us despair. We converts have, therefore, a double duty to perform. Firstly, to bear pain patiently in

imitation of Our Lord ; secondly, to prove to those outside the Church that by our incorporation into that mystical body of His, His strength is made perfect in our weakness, and we are enabled to bear all things in Him —although we look forward with longing to that blessed land, where there shall be “ no more sorrow, nor pain ” and where God Himself “ shall wipe away all tears ” from our eyes.

“ Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may learn to bear pain patiently, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

or

“HUMILIATION.”

“ Learn of Me, for I am humble and meek.”

—St. Matthew XI., 29.

THE crowning with the crown of thorns was the note of mockery in our Blessed Lord's passion. Those who treated Him thus wished in their hatred to punish Him for daring to call Himself a King. They were determined to add the bitter cup of humiliation to His mental and bodily sufferings. They crowned Him a King of sorrows. So the cruel thorns pressed into His sacred brow, and once again His precious blood gushed forth for our redemption. It was thus that He was presented to the people, with the words : “ Behold the Man ! ” Can any failure have been more complete from an earthly point of view ? Despised, rejected, mocked, forsaken, denied ; was there anything still wanting in the bitterness of Our Lord's humiliation ?

The world acclaims those who attain great positions, who are popular, who gain success,

who amass honours, wealth and fame. Let us listen to the voice of Our Saviour : " Learn of me to be humble and meek." How opposite is His teaching to that of the world ! " Blessed are the poor in spirit ! " What is our own attitude towards humiliation ? Why, we cannot bear even the slightest reproach, the smallest attack on our dignity ; we resent the least sign of want of appreciation, of disrespect ! We are so jealous of our good repute, so careful of the impression we make on others, so taken up with what the world may think of our actions.

The virtue of humility is one that Converts should strive after more than any other. There lies a certain danger in the very security we feel in our faith, for it might easily lead us to look down upon those outside the Church, and to show impatience towards their beliefs. This is distinctly against God's wish. He who would have us learn humility from Him, would have us gentle and humble with all, even though we disagree with their views, and have little in common with them. The virtue of humility is certainly one of the most Christ-like of all, and the ability to be able to bear humiliation the surest sign that we are learning of Him to be humble and meek. There is nothing harder, nothing

more opposed to our innate love of, and respect for, ourselves.

Converts are often humiliated on account of their beliefs. Many are treated as weak-minded, as aliens ; they are mocked and jeered at for adhering to the rules of the Church ; they are taunted by the world, and described as ignorant, idolatrous, narrow-minded, pedantic. Truly, every convert, however kindly and indulgently his conversion has been treated, has plenty of opportunity of practising the virtue of humility. When humiliations come, and come they will, let us look at a picture of Jesus wearing His crown of thorns, and let us learn of Him to be humble and meek.

“ Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may learn to bear humiliation, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

or

“BEARING OUR BURDENS.”

“He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”—

St. Matthew X., 38.

THE carrying of the Cross by Our Saviour was the outward and visible sign of the burden which He bore for our sakes in His soul. Christ bore the heaviest burden ever borne by man, for on those loving human shoulders He carried the burden of the sins of mankind, and in that loving, sacred heart was the sorrowful certainty that for countless thousands He would die in vain. That must have been His real burden, as He staggered and fell under the weight of the heavy Cross laid upon Him by His tormentors.

There is no human life, however prosperous to outward appearances, which has not got its secret cross. There may be those who seem exempt from it, because to human eyes they appear to have all that the world can give them, but it is not so. St. Paul tells us that “every man shall bear his own burden.”

Sooner or later it comes to all of us, in one shape or another. We are very apt to look around us, and to envy this person or the other for having blessings which we do not possess. If we could but read their hearts, we should learn to see that Our Heavenly Father is not unjust, treating one child with indulgence and another with harshness.

The Convert's cross is necessarily a heavy one. They have stood at the cross-roads, and have had to make their choice between their conscience on the one side and all they held most dear in this world on the other. They have had to face the possibilities of estrangements, dissensions, contempt. At the best they have to face the burden of loneliness ; the daily cross of being alone in their deepest and most sacred beliefs ; the inability of opening out their hearts to those whom they love most dearly ; the sadness of trying to bridge over the inevitable gulf which must arise between them and those who do not share their faith. How then are our burdens to be borne ? There must above all be no trying to shift them, to lay them down. Our Lord says : " Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." We are then to accept our burdens for His sake, Who bore so much for us. We must walk in His footsteps,

and try to follow Him on that painful "Way of the Cross." We must learn to carry our cross patiently, without complaint, and when it appears to crush us we must do as He bids us, Who invites us to cast our burden on Him and He will sustain us.

" Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may learn to bear our burdens patiently, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

THE CRUCIFIXION

or

“DEATH.”

“The Wages of sin is death.”—

Romans VI., 23.

WITH Our Lord's death on the Cross ended the great tragedy of His passion. He was crucified for our sins ; He died that we might have life. It was our sins that nailed Him to that cruel Cross, that caused the blood to flow from those five most precious wounds, that made Him endure that agony until the bitter end.

There is not one of us who has not at some time or another of our lives crucified Our Lord. By anger ; by neglect ; by evil words ; by forbidden actions ; by want of love. The sacrifice on the Cross was offered for each one of us. We could never have attained pardon without it. When we think of His unspeakable love for us, we cannot commit sin. But we are apt to forget. There are times when He is far from us ; when we think it will be time enough to remember Him later on ; when we temporise with the

Almighty. We forget that death may take us unawares, that we have been told that "nothing defiled can enter Heaven." While we have the bitter consciousness of unforgiven sin in our soul, we cannot hope for eternal happiness. There is no man, however holy, who has not at one time or another committed grievous sin. His soul is stained by that sin, until the blood of Christ has washed that stain away; in other words, unless Our Lord, through His Church, has forgiven that sin, it remains in the soul. In instituting the Sacrament of Penance, He has given us the means of cleansing ourselves of our sins. "Whosoever sins ye shall remit they are remitted." Christ's priests have received from Him the power of absolving us from our sins, and thereby cleansing our souls.

Converts soon learn to realise the blessed comfort and lightness of heart which follows on receiving the priest's absolution. It enables us to put aside the past and to begin afresh. Each visit to the confessional is a stepping-stone to heaven. The advice received there, the encouragement which is never sought in vain, keeps up our courage and assists us in the daily battle against sin. Still, we must perpetually bear in mind that

every fresh sin lessens our chances of eternal happiness. "The wages of sin is death." Terrible indeed must be the remorse and despair of that man who sees death approaching, and has failed to cleanse his soul from its sins ; who is going forth to meet his God, and dare no longer hope in His mercy ! To such a one, death is death indeed, for to him this life's joys are over, and when the moment comes for him to stand before his Judge, he may expect to hear those dread words : "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire." He will be shut out from the blessed union with God in all eternity, and will have received in very truth the wages of sin.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may learn to avoid sin, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

THE RESURRECTION
or
"OVERCOMING EVIL."

"Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father ; even so we also should walk in newness of life."—

Romans VI., 4.

OUR Blessed Lord's glorious Resurrection from the dead is the surest proof of His Divinity, and the very root and foundation of our belief. Without it His Godhead could not have been proved. It was by His Resurrection that was fulfilled the prophecy He had made: "Destroy this Temple" (His Body) "and in three days I will raise it up again." Death had no dominion over Him, because He was Himself Master over life and death. "Death is swallowed up in victory." When, on that first glad Easter morn, St. Mary Magdalen and the disciples stood before that empty tomb, how great must have been their joy, for now were they convinced that He whom they worshipped was God. No other than He could have achieved such a victory. Easter is the most

joyous of all feasts, because it never fails to remind us of the great victory of Christ our Lord.

This glorious mystery is typical of the resurrection of our souls from sin. St. Paul reminds us that "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life," also that "our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Converts should therefore examine themselves carefully, as to whether the graces which they have received have led them to shun sin and to crucify the old man. They must remember that their responsibility is now far greater than ever before, for in future when they are tempted to commit sin, it will not be they alone who will suffer, but that mystical Body of Christ, to which they now belong, and from which they have already received so many blessings. Every sin of theirs will be laid at her door, will be ascribed to her influence. As they love and honour the Church, they must strive to keep pure and walk in newness of life, shunning evil, refusing to serve sin.

With our resurrection from sin comes the hope of eternal life. In His infinite love God

never wished us to perish, but gave His own Son, in order that we should have everlasting life. In Christ's own words: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." For those who live in the faith, the thought of death should not be terrible, for it can but be a passing moment, for they shall have "passed from death unto life."

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may overcome evil, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

THE ASCENSION
or
"OBEYING GOD'S CALL."

"Called to be saints."—

Cor. I., 2.

OUR Blessed Saviour, having finished His work on earth, ascended to heaven, and became reunited with His divine Father.

God calls every human soul to Himself. Those who refuse to hear His call, and deliberately close their hearts to it in this life will be shut out from His presence in all eternity. Those who follow His call and live in accordance with His commands, may, through the infinite merits of His passion, hope to enter some day into their reward.

Every convert has received a very special call from God. A call which had to be followed, at whatever cost to self. A call to follow Jesus; to "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise"; a call to approach nearer to His Divine presence, and to be made one with Him in His most holy Sacrament. But it is not sufficient to have obeyed God's call. We

must render ourselves worthy of it. We must consecrate ourselves to His service in whatever way He seems to desire. We must place ourselves entirely at His disposal, asking Him for guidance in every occurrence of our daily lives, however trivial they may seem. He will not refuse to direct us, provided we ask Him with sufficient confidence.

When St. Paul spoke of those who were "called to be saints," he alluded to all those inhabitants of Rome, who had embraced Christianity, and the word "saint" in those days was another term for a Christian, as contrasted with those who rejected or had not heard of Our Lord. The word "called" shows that St. Paul held that every conversion was the work of God, not of man. He speaks also of his own "call" to be an apostle. In another sense we may take it that we are all "called to be saints." That is, having been made Christians and members of His Church, we are called to lead "saintly" lives, to imitate the saints of God, to be saints as well as Christians. There are many different calls from God. There are those whom He wishes to retain in the world; to them He says: "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and to God the

things which are God's," that is, "Live your lives in the world, giving the world its due, but keep your hearts and minds fixed on Me." There are others whom He calls more closely to His service. Such is the call to the priesthood: "If ye love Me, feed My sheep; feed My lambs"; or the call to foreign missions: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel." But the highest call of all is given to those purest and holiest of souls, who embrace the religious life. To them He says: "Leave *all* and follow Me." And so they leave all the world thinks worth living for, not only home and kindred, but every natural and harmless human pleasure and comfort, in order to give themselves completely to Him. And so, having renounced all to follow Him, and "resting not day or night praising God," "the Lamb which is in their midst feeds them" and "gives them to drink of living waters."

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, that we may always obey His call, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST
or
"FAITH IN THE CHURCH."

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost."—

St. John XX., 27.

THE descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles was the final seal set by Our Lord on His Church. From henceforth she would be animated by His spirit, and had received His authority to teach and to preach. He also promised her the Comforter, the spirit of truth, who was to abide with her for ever, and He promised to be with her Himself in His most holy Sacrament even unto the end of the world.

By being incorporated into that Church, which is in very truth the mystical body of Christ Our Lord, that Holy Spirit which descended on the disciples at Pentecost, must also dwell in us. Through her, the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" we have our share in the "Communion of Saints." That is, we are in communion with the saints in Heaven by asking them to pray for us, and we are in communion

with the suffering souls in Purgatory by offering our prayers on their behalf. We learn the true meaning of the "forgiveness of sins" every time we kneel with true contrition in the confessional. We have an actual share in the merits of Our Blessed Lord and of His saints. Through the Church we are fed with that promised bread from heaven, which is the food of our souls, and our strength and comfort in the daily battle of life.

Every Convert should therefore be ready ever to uphold the Church's dignity, to defend her honour, to witness to her holiness and her beauty. As "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for Her," so He wishes us to love her, and to spend ourselves for her benefit. For we are citizens of no mean city. "Her bulwarks are strong, and salvation dwelleth within her walls." We should honour her priests, follow her precepts, obey her teaching, abide by her laws. We should go to her in our troubles and difficulties, for she heals all wounds, and has a balm for every pain. We can be certain that her teaching is the true one because Our Lord said: "He who heareth you heareth Me." She, like her Divine Master, "teaches as one having authority, not as the scribes." "She is a city which hath foundations, whose

builder and maker is God." And so we look to her for the salvation of our souls. We believe in her divine mission and power, because she has received both straight from God. In her we find a foretaste of that greater glory which is to come ; within her walls dwells His Almighty Presence, guarding her from all evil, and leading her Himself into all truth. " Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house."

 " Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners that we may ever have faith in the Church now, and at the hour of our death. Amen." 3



THE ASSUMPTION
or
"VENERATION OF OUR LADY."

"All generations shall call me blessed."—
St. Luke I., 48.

THE Church teaches that twelve years after the Crucifixion, Mary gave up her sorrowful soul to God. We believe that He of whom it has been said that He would not "let this Holy One see corruption," did not allow Our Lady's body to remain in the grave, but admitted her at once into Heaven, where ever since she has pleaded powerfully on our behalf.

Non-Catholic Christians honestly believe that the worship they owe to Christ would be minimised by veneration of His Blessed Mother. In their desire to honour His Godhead, they forget His Manhood. They forget that no human being among the countless millions who throughout the ages have inhabited this earth, has ever stood in a more intimate relation to their Creator than Mary, the Mother of Our Saviour. From all eternity the Almighty had singled

her out for the greatest honour ever conferred upon a created being. Through her it was that our Blessed Lord was given to us, to her care He was entrusted in childhood, she never ceased in her pure and selfless worship of Him, she kept all His sayings in her heart. For thirty years she was His daily companion ; she, unlike the disciples, never betrayed Him, but remained with Him until the end at the foot of the Cross. Can we for one moment imagine that she can have been anything but most pure, most chaste, most patient, most lovable, most admirable ?

We often judge the moral worth of men and women by their devotion to their mothers. If human children are capable of the most intense love and devotion to their mothers, what must not the love and devotion of Jesus have been for His ? Can we believe Him to have been less loving, less obedient, less devoted, than the most perfect son on earth ? We take it for granted that nothing could have exceeded Our Lord's love and respect for His mother. Almost His last thought on the Cross was to provide for her, in leaving her in the care of His beloved disciple, St. John. In the person of " the disciple whom Jesus loved " He gave her to us all as a

mother. Hear Mary herself : " All generations shall call me blessed." Hear the Archangel from heaven, God's own messenger, " Thou art highly favoured, thou hast found favour with God." Hear St. Elizabeth : " Blessed art thou among women ! "

From the earliest times the Church has always given to Mary the most whole-hearted devotion, the most profound respect, the most filial love. We believe her to be very powerful with God, and therefore have recourse to her in our troubles. She is our intercessor with God, our " Mother of good Counsel," the " Comforter of the afflicted," the " Refuge of sinners."

Converts should therefore strive to acquire a very special devotion for Our Lady, for the Church bids us to go to her, and if we do so, she will in time become most dear to us, and in very truth a Mother.

" Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners that we may learn to love and venerate thee as we should, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY

or

“ETERNAL HAPPINESS.”

“ There appeared a great wonder in heaven ; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”—

Rev. XII., 1.

THE vision of St. John can have referred to no other than to the Mother of Our Lord. To her alone can have been due such honour, such marks of royalty. Of royal descent, royal through the Kingship of her divine Son, the Church teaches that on her Assumption, God rewarded her for her patient faith and her sufferings by crowning her Queen of Heaven ; that there she reigns for evermore, Queen of Apostles and of Martyrs, of Saints and of our souls. And so it is that we pray to her thus : “ Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope ! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then,

most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us ; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ."

St. Paul tells us that " eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." It would therefore be an utter impossibility for us to try and picture even for a moment the crowning happiness which awaits those who will be found worthy to enter into the joy of the Lord. The pleasures and beauties of this world will fade into nothing as compared with the blessings which are prepared for God's chosen ones in heaven. There will be found once again our lost ideals, the friends from whom we were parted, the work which we failed to do here below ; there shall our souls find that promised peace, which passeth all understanding, that eternal rest we crave for, that perpetual light which is denied to us here. There shall our sorrows be drowned in joy, all hidden things be made clear to us, all discord cease. There shall we (cleansed and purified by the searching fires of purgatory)

join those countless multitudes, whom no man can number, of all nations and kindred, and people, and tongues, who stand before the throne and the Lamb, singing: "Holy, Holy, Holy" to the living God. There shall we behold Him at last in His beauty, whom we worship here beneath a veil, no longer seeing "as through a glass darkly, but face to face." "In my flesh shall I see God." Mine eyes shall feast on the King's beauty and I shall praise and adore Him in all eternity.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death, that we may be deemed worthy of eternal happiness. Amen."

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